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Date: October 15, 2002

To: W-2 Contract and Implementation (C&I) Committee
W-2 C&I Performance Standards Subcommittee

From: Gary Denis
Workforce Programs Bureau
Division of Workforce Solutions

Re: Topic: Disregard of 2nd Quarter Placements from the Assessment Standard

Date presented by Subcommittee to C&I Committee: August 16, 2002?

Subcommittee: Performance Standards Subcommittee

Summary of Subcommittee Recommendations:

Agencies failed the Assessment standard in the second quarter due to technical CARES issues, lack of understanding of the process and lack of data to gauge procedural problems. To alleviate this the subcommittee asked that DWS disregard the 2nd quarter placements from the assessment standard.

DWS/DWD response:

DWS will disregard placements from the informal assessment standard for April and May of 2002, but not June of 2002.

1. DWS agreed to disregard the informal assessment requirements for April and May because reports that would have enabled agencies to measure their compliance with this standard were not available.
2. DWS did not agree with waiving June placements because the reports had been released and agencies should have had ample time to research what their individual issues were in regards to meeting this standard and provide follow-up training to their staff.
3. DWS did not agree with waiving any of the months for Formal Assessments because it has been a long standing policy in W-2 that individuals with disabilities need to be assessed formally and recording formal assessment activities has not changed since the beginning of W-2.
4. There were several reasons listed in the subcommittee's issue paper that related to CARES being inaccurate and not working properly. This has been investigated and is not accurate.

Reference to other documents, if applicable:

Assessment Standard Issue Paper, Aug. 28, 2002.

Attachments: Assessment Standard Issue Paper, Aug. 28, 2002

Assessment Standard Issue Paper

Date: Corrected 8/28/02

Division/Division Contact: Jane Kahl, Division of Workforce Solutions

Author: Performance Standards Sub-Committee of the C & I Committee

Topic:

Request for Waiver of Assessment Standard for the Second Quarter, April – June 2002.

Placement Month	Report Month	WISDOM Display Month
April	May	June
May	June	July
June	July	August

Problem Description or Issue:

Agencies failed the standard in the second quarter due to technical CARES issues, lack of understanding of process, and lack of data to gauge procedural problems.

Background:

W-2 policy has always required agencies to provide an upfront informal assessment of all W-2 applicants to determine the most appropriate placement in W-2. This policy has also required agencies to complete an informal assessment at anytime a placement change is considered or made. The Assessment for Appropriate Placement standard was designed to formally track the rate that agencies complete and record the informal and formal assessments of W-2 participants.

Until the point of implementation of this measure, there was not a standardized and universal process to track how often agencies recorded assessment information for participants. Until the implementation of the new assessment driver flow and additional screens, agencies recorded assessment information on the assessment screens, case comments, and in the paper file.

The only way that the state was assured that assessments were being completed for participants was through the monitoring process of the Area Administrator's office and through extension requests.

W-2 agencies were first provided detail regarding the Assessment for Appropriate Placement measure at the November 5, 2001 Performance Standards Symposium. Screen prints of the CARES mock-ups for the revised and additional Assessment screens were provided to all participants. A presentation was provided explaining the

new field “Do You Want to Initiate an Assessment” on WPED, which is the key CARES entry for the Informal Assessment component of the measure.

At the Symposium, agencies asked if there were going to be reports, similar to FAE and Basic Education that could be accessed to track the standard, either through the on-line reports or EOS. Agencies were informed there would be reports available, but primarily through WEBI (WISDOM).

The screens went into production in late December 2001 (approximately 12/21/01). There were a number of technical difficulties with the screens. Many times the driver flow would not initiate when a “Y” was put in for the “Do you want to initiate an assessment” field. Other technical problems included the case dropping out of the driver flow before the driver flow was completed and the “Last Assessment Update Date” not being recorded even though the driver flow was completed.

In addition, the state was having difficulty with the design of the report mechanism, which was to track the assessment measure. In response to these difficulties, the state made the decision to waive the first quarter figures from the 2002-2003 contract period. In March, a fix was put into CARES to correct the technical difficulties of the driver flow. Agencies were informed to identify cases that were still not working in CARES with the driver flow. All affected PINs were to be sent to the AA or Call Center so they could be fixed. Agencies were notified of this in March and were instructed to identify and report all cases before the end of April, the first month the standard would count for the contract period.

During this time, a number of formal inquiries were made to the state requesting data on how agencies were doing in the measure and for more clarification on when to complete the driver flow. Agencies were informed that there were still problems with the reports and the first reports would not be available until mid-June. The report for the first required month (April placements) was published in WISDOM on 6/17/02.

The following lists the statewide results for the standard:

Month	Agencies in Measure	Informal Rate		Formal Rate		Failed at least 1 part	Overall Failure Rate
		# Failed	Failure Rate	# Failed	Failure Rate		
February	55	40/55	72.7%	32/55	58.2%	46/55	83.6%
March	53	35/53	66.0%	26/53	49.1%	43/53	81.1%
April	51	34/51	66.6%	26/51	51.0%	41/51	80.4%
May	58	34/58	61.8%	25/58	43.1%	41/58	70.7%
June	50	23/50	41.8%	16/50	32%	31/50	60.8%

Issues:

There are a number of issues that have been identified with the implementation of this standard that the committee believes warrants action by the state.

Issue 1: Lack of Data

The Assessment for Appropriate Placement measure is designed with the same logic of the Full and Appropriate measure. Both are exclusively tied to accurate CARES entries of actions completed with the participant. When FAE was implemented in the 2000 contract, agencies had existing tools to evaluate how workers were doing in applying proper CARES entries. WPFN was able to identify cases that did not have an EP and WPRI was able to identify cases without activities posted on WPCP and could list every participant enrolled with the total assigned hours for each office and each worker. In addition, there were EOS reports, such as C740 available to check the FAE status on a weekly basis.

To date, there are no reports available to even identify what cases will be in the measure until after the report is run. Managers have not had any tools to evaluate implementation of the new CARES procedures and implement corrective actions. The state informed agencies via the C & I committee that a new weekly report in EOS is being developed to identify participants in the Informal Assessment part of the measure. The implementation date has not yet been released. In August, it was shared, although not on a statewide basis, that EOS C740 report could be used as a tickler report for the Assessment measure because it identifies the placement and placement begin date for every W-2 participant in the agency. Because of the nature of the report, it does not catch all individuals who would be in the measure, but is a good starting point.

No data was available for the first quarter until June 17th, the same date that the first counted month's data (April), was released. In looking at the February and March reports, they had nearly identical failure rates as April's.

In late June, as agencies were able to begin evaluating the cases that failed, corrective actions were implemented. But because of the late release date of the reports, it was already too late to correct errors for more than half of May placements (it was beyond the 30-day period for all May placements 5/1 – 5/18 as of the report release date).

It is obvious from the report data for May and June, agencies have made significant strides in correcting procedural errors. The error rate dropped 10 percentage points in May and another 10 percentage points in June.

The statistics clearly indicate a direct correlation to availability of data and improvement in the measure.

Issue 2: Lack of Clarity and Understanding of the Standard

Even though there was a hands-off paper training of the new informal assessment driver flow offered in December 2001, it was not consistently and clearly explained when and how to process the standard in CARES.

A number of agencies were unclear that the standard included ALL placements on ACWI. The standard was often compared to FAE and Basic Education in regards to the “mindset” of CARES entry. Those standards only include Employment Position placements.

Because of the numerous technical difficulties of the driver flow in the first quarter, many workers continued the old process of recording assessments – keying the information in the assessment screens and case comments, but not actually initiating the driver flow (because it didn’t work). As the technical problems were fixed, many workers were still use to the “old” process.

Issue 3: Rate of Failure across the State

When the PS Sub-Committee evaluates a standard, the committee assesses the standard for a fundamental flaw in either the design of how the standard is measured or if there is a failure to account for all factors that would have a significant impact on the accuracy and validity of the standard.

When evaluating the Assessment for Appropriate Placement standard, the committee did not find a fundamental flaw in the design of the measure. The committee is in agreement that the purpose of the measure is appropriate and methodology for tracking the measure is valid. The committee has determined, though, that the implementation of the standard had fundamental flaws that resulted in widespread failure rates. This implementation process had a significant impact on the standard’s accuracy and validity.

As is clearly identified in the first five months of data (February through June), there were significant errors in processing the measure’s requirements in CARES. Once data became available to agencies, significant progress was made in the measure.

Most of the 46 agencies that have failed the standard will not be able to overcome the errors made before clarifications were issued and reports became available if the second quarter data is retained for the contract measures even if they are at 100% for ever subsequent month in the contract period.

Alternatives:

1. Retain the data from the second quarter for the contract period.

Pros: This option would not require any changes to the current standard.

Cons: There are three major problems with letting the second quarter data stand:

- The state would be holding agencies accountable for a period of the standard when there were no tools available for agencies to use to evaluate their agencies.
- The state is currently evaluating a flood of Adjustment requests for the Assessment Standard for second quarter. The majority of the requests are being approved and essentially wiping out second quarter data for entire agencies. By retaining the data from the second quarter, the state is actually creating a significant workload for itself, without actually preserving the integrity of the report data.
- There is a possibility that half of the state W-2 agencies will fail Right of First selection, not because of a failure to provide service to customers, but because there was not proper support to monitor technical entries into CARES.

2. Disregard the second quarter data for the Assessment for Appropriate Placement Measure.

Pros: The major advantages to selecting this option are:

- The state would not have to evaluate the numerous Adjustment requests for this standard for the second quarter.
- It would provide equal treatment for all agencies, since a number have received the adjustments already.
- Agencies would have a legitimate opportunity to pass the standard through the remaining contract period.

Cons: There are a few potential disadvantages to this option:

- Agencies that did well in the disregarded months would lose numbers that would help them attain bonus rates and if they do not perform well in the later months, could ultimately fail the standard without the second quarter data. The committee believes this is only a slight possibility, since there were only a few agencies that passed the standard, and now that there is a better understanding of the standard and tools available to evaluate the standard, agencies have the ability to manage their caseload and avoid technical processing errors.
- It could send a message that Wisconsin is not serious about holding W-2 agencies accountable for performance. The committee does not believe that by waiving the second quarter data, there would not be an implication that the state is “soft” on agencies. We believe the justification for waiver is solely centered on technical problems with implementation. There is no evidence to

support a potential claim that agencies were not actually providing the assessments, on the contrary, evidence shows that assessments were completed, but not properly recorded.

Recommendations of the PS Sub-Committee:

The Performance Standards Sub-Committee recommends the C & I committee adopt Option 2 – waive the second quarter data and that the C & I committee send that recommendation to the Secretary's office.

Technical Suggestions

Move the question “Do you want to initiate a new assessment?” to ACWI so the driver flow is automatically initiated when a placement or placement change is made.

Create a weekly Formal Assessment report in EOS in addition to the forthcoming weekly Informal Assessment report.

Comments/Positions by External Partners: N/A**Comments by Technical Reviewers:**

The committee has received input from state representatives on the technical aspects of the measures design and impact of how the recommendations would have on the standards and the agencies.

Recommendation to Secretary:

Pending C & I committee vote.